

images, bearing some analogy to the visions of classical poetry^{51*}

The arguments for resignation to death are not so much drawn from future scenes, as from a consideration of the evils of the present life; the necessity of yielding to a general and irreversible law; the dignity of submitting with that calmness which conscious virtue is entitled to feel; and the improbability (as these writers sometimes intimate) that any formidable evils are to be apprehended after death, except by a few of the very worst of the human race. Those arguments are in general rather aimed to quiet fear than to animate hope. The pleaders of them seem more concerned to convey the dying man in peace and silence out of the world, than to conduct him to the celestial felicity. Let us but see him embarked on his unknown voyage in fair weather, and we are not accountable for what he may meet, or whither he may be carried when he is gone out of sight. They seldom present a lively view of the distant happiness, especially in any of those images in which the Christian revelation has intimated its nature. In which of these books, and by which of the real or fictitious characters whose last hours and thoughts they sometimes display, will you find, in terms or in spirit, the apostolic sentiments adopted, "To depart and be with Christ is far better; " f " Willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord ?" J The very existence of that sacred testimony which has given the only genuine consolations in death, and the only just conceptions of what is beyond it, seems to be scarcely recollected; while the ingenuous moralists are searching the exhausted common-places of the stoic philosophy, or citing the treacherous maxims of a religion perverted to accordance with the corrupt wishes of mankind, or even recollecting the lively sayings of the few

* I am very far from disliking philosophical speculation, or daring flights of fancy, on this high subject. On the contrary, it appears to me strange that any one firmly holding the belief of a life to come, should not have both the intellectual faculty and the imagination excited to the utmost effort in the trial, however unavailing, to give some outlines of definite form to the unseen realities. What I mean to censure in the mode of referring to another life, is, the care to avoid any direct resemblance or recognition of the ideas which the New Testament has given to guide, in some small, very small degree, our conjectures.

t PluL i. 23. J 2 Corinthian* v. 8.